

Aboard an eastbound 727 from Albuquerque, I was at last able to give some thought to my short-lived tenure as the Communications Director to the Chairman of the Navajo Nation.

My initial thoughts were of anger, and then, too, sadness. I thought back to the manipulations of Indians and groups for the political benefit of some, and to the detriment of others.

I was now out of a job, but my professional integrity was left in tact --for my exposing what I felt was a Navajo Government injustice.

The people I left behind, the citizens of the Navajo Nation, would have to deal with their government -- a government that thrived on confrontation instead of cooperation.

What of government's policies toward Native Americans. Are policies improving their quality of life or perpetuating a reliance on government for the "sins" of frontiersman years ago? Chief Justice John Marshall spoke of Indian tribes as "domestic dependent nations". That was in the early 18th Century. Is that something Marshall wanted to be perpetuated?

The Navajo Nation, the largest in the U.S., covers the area of West Virginia. Located in Arizona, New Mexico and Utah, (it is home to over 186,000 native Americans. The government of the Navajo Nation receives money not only from the federal government, but also from many of its own sources -- such as royalties levied on mineral deposits mined within the confines of the Navajo Nation.

What I was to be involved with as a press secretary for the largest Indian tribe in America, would be the most eye opening experience in my life, testing not only my patience, but also that notion of that \_! considered as practical ethical behavior in government. :

I was entering my eighth year as the public information

My philosophy about government was that accountability, and the perception of integrity in government are the two most

important ingredients to maintaining the public's trust in the

institution. Once it has been lost there is nothing anyone, not even the slickest publicity agent, can do to restore that trust.

So there I sat on a June afternoon working at my word processor on an assortment of letters to be mailed to high school social studies teachers. The letter was a "sales pitch" for our in-school program where I'd go out and talk about county government. I was trying to bring the county out of the "dark ages" for so few understood what exactly it did.

The telephone rang. And the caller from Washington asked "How would you like to work for the Navajo Indian Nation?"

(Some two months earlier I had sent a resume in reply to an advertisement calling for a public relations professional who sought a career opportunity in public service. Well, it would certainly be an enhancement over my current position, so I sent it. And now the moment

of truth had arrived.)

For some two seconds (I remember the silence), I paused and mustering all the enthusiasm I could (for the position sounded quite intriguing) I said "Yes, I am interested!" That was a fateful sentence that would forever change my life. ( Could an "Anglo" be of service to our native Americans?

(Very soon into my new position as press secretary, I found there was little I could do to stem the wide spread media cynicism, other than to maintain a "holding action" against what was viewed by many as the "insurgent media.")

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Early in July, I received a telephone call from the Washington based Madison public affairs where I was asked to come in for an interview.

The Madison Group had a contract with the Navajo Nation The Washington to do everything from business development, to Capitol Hill based Madison lobbying. At this point I had no idea of the power they Group

wielded. If I had been smarter, I would have asked "Were they working for the Navajo Nation, or the Chairman? (It would be like a privately contracted group working exclusively for a governor! The citizens wouldn't put up with that)

The two people I met with in Washington seemed impressed with what I was trying to accomplish at the local level --and I sincerely thought I would be given some latitude to pursue the same types of things I had with county government. I was wrong. The Madison Group called the shots.

The next call I received was again from Washington asking me to come to Window Rock, Arizona, the Navajo Nation capital, for another interview.

Everything was moving fast now. While continuing important programs I had begun in Summit County -- I somehow managed to ' squeeze some time away for this interview.

After disassembling a series of real estate tax exhibits featured at area shopping malls, I hopped on a Sunday night flight to Phoenix which arrived at midnight. The next morning I would catch a commuter flight to Gallup where I would then rent a car for the 35 mile ride to Window Rock from my 11:00 A.M.

appointment -- hopping back in the car after the interview for the three hour ride to Albuquerque where I would catch a 4:24 P.M. flight to

Cleveland? Would it all be possible in one day?

(Against the backdrop of this very tight schedule -- I would be remiss if I didn't mention the beautiful land of the West. It is something every American should see once in their life for it is a classic beauty, so rustic and so spectacular. I was awed by it.)

I arrived on time for my interview, but I was to be kept  
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interview waiting for almost an hour. After reading all the books that said that not only should the interviewee not be late, but the interviewer also had the obligation to respect the applicant's time as well, I came so close to saying "Forget it" and leaving.

Finally, I was ushered into the Chairman's special meeting room where I met with the representative from the Washington based Madison Group, Chairman MacDonald, and members of his administrative staff. I really don't know why the staff members were there.

(I had done my research about the Navajo Nation and seemed impressed by what the Chairman was trying to accomplish -- job ( creation and improved educational opportunities for his people. But as I would later wonder, were these news articles to benefit whom? The Navajo Nation or its Chairman?)

In an interview one sometimes has to be very dynamic and that's exactly what I was. With my notepad in hand, I began

pacing throughout the interview area talking about my ideas for the Navajo Nation. I thought my ideas were well received, although the questions and comments they asked were puzzling.

"What were my political beliefs?" I was asked. I was a Republican. Did I drink too much? No. And then I was asked my: outside: activities-- which I enumerated, and was told that -- that Chairman came first . (I always thought, on the contrary, that involvement in outside activities always enhanced an organization's reputation in the community. After seeing its employees involved in community affairs people would say, "That's a caring organization!")

I left the interview at 12:45 P.M. and made a fast dash back to Albuquerque. I made the plane bound for Cleveland.

Pete Segall of the Madison Group would later make all the background checks. I thought this particularly strange, as again, who was doing the hiring?

By July 18, I was sitting as an employee of the Navajo Nation involved with public relations issues that gave me little time to think of their merits or demerits.

Former                -1- ^ac^ been warned by one former ABC television news pro-  
ABC                ,

news                ducer (who was now employed by the Madison Group) that govern-  
producer

comments ment was the biggest show in the Navajo Nation. That's where the

power and money are. I cast her comment aside hoping, as I had in the past, to rise above the partisan political bickering to pursue a program that would benefit the Navajo people. But this was not to happen.

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In the case of the Navajo government -- it was not the "battle" between two political parties, but simply between those who had the power and those who wanted it.

My first task was to write a press release that would put "cold water" on an investigation the U.S. Civil Rights Commission had undertaken of the Navajo judicial system. They had issued subpoenas asking for members of the Navajo Nation to comment on alleged violations of Navajo rights.

(The subpoenas came as a result of alleged mistreatment of Navajos by their own justice system).

The Chairman and his attorney general took great offense to the federal government's making inquiry into this matter. "We have our own judicial system" they said. To them it was above reproach and should free from any federal government inquiry. But the question that was never to be answered was "Had the rights of Navajos been violated by their own justice system?" Besides, I thought, didn't any American citizen have a right for a redress of grievances to their own federal government?

This was the first example of where there would be finger pointing at the federal government in an effort to shift the \focus from the

shortcomings of the Chairman's policies or departments.

And yet, as I began my job, I was hopeful about the positive things I\_ could do for the Navajo Nation.

Already, from my first day, it seemed like I was a man who had been on the job for months. A previous knowledge of

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bureaucracies proved to be invaluable as I quickly made contact with those individuals and their departments that carried out policies for the Navajo Nation.

As a press secretary, I quickly had to become familiar with all aspects of the tribal government. But, my, oh my, what an organization. I remember my first day on the job where I asked for an organizational chart -- a request that left quite a few people scratching their heads. When one was found, I began exploring the wonders of this bureaucracy.

Chairman MacDonald is the chairman of the tribal council. Every four years he runs with a Vice Chairman who acts as the presiding officer -of the tribal council, and represents the Chairman at many ceremonial functions.

Account-       The tribal council is broken down into several committees, ability

but the committees at least have yet, as I was to find, to



realize their full potential as an important check on the power of the executive branch.

(I was a firm believer that citizens should also have an important role in the policy making process. Theirs is a critical part in the process. But their role would be restricted especially in the budgetary process as budget hearings for the Navajo Nation would be held in far away Albuquerque. Does that provide for accountability of government?)

In addition to my serving as a press secretary, I also doubled as a speech writer, and columnist for the Chairman. If speech writing was the quick production of words and thoughtful quotes, then I succeeded. But in my mind I hadn't succeeded

because there was little thought given to the speeches -- it was 3-  
"production line" mentality. I can only thank my quotation book for making the Chairman look like a thoughtful man.

Larry Speakers wrote of his creating quotes for the President -- with the resulting indignant comments from public relations professionals. What Larry Speakes did, we were told, was the exception to the rule of professional conduct. And yet, I saw quotes created by the Madison Group with the note -- "get the Chairman's approval of these quotes."

I was amazed at how the media people viewed the Navajo Nation -- as some type of unique story in America. Was it really? Certainly this perceived uniqueness was used by some for their own personal gain, or so I

was beginning to think. In reality the Navajo Nation's government was no different from any municipal or county government bodies of equivalent size. But its leaders had this perception of it being something far greater.

The media was aware of the problem of accountability. One such problem -- the walk-out of tribal council members from one session -- pointed to an underlying problem with the system '•'of government.

When Betty Reid of the Gallup Independent called asking for a comment, I chose not to reply. Members of Congress walk out sessions all the time. What was so special about this?

What I didn't realize that the tactics chosen by the presiding officer (the vice chairman) smacked of something quite less than democratic, in that representatives of the opposition were refused recognition to critically speak of Chairman MacDonald's administration.

This was one of many incidents that *I* felt powerless to affect. By my second week I was swamped.

I was a one person press office! My log of messages for just one day looked something like this (I cite it only to show that wide variety

of issues I had to deal with).

David Iverson - Wisconsin PBS - wants to do a documentary on the Navajo Judicial system.

Janet Rusk from the Page, Arizona newspaper - asking for a comment on Navajo preference hiring.

Betty Reid - Gallup Independent -- Seeking information on U.S. Senate Bill 1236 (Navajo - Hopi). (Funny thing about this bill - when it passed the Senate and was to be referred to the House for committee and possible floor action, the Washington based group made it into such a big thing - like it had already ( passed both houses and was about to be sent to the President. Trying to create a "little momentum before consideration by the House?" or "Much Ado About Nothing?")

Patrice Loche - Albuquerque Journal - seeking information on the contract for an agency dealing with the mentally handicapped.

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Mary Adams, Secretary for Pete Segall of the Madison Group regarding arrangements in Phoenix.

Kathy Lee from Fox Broadcasting -- information on the Baby K case (Did whites have the right to keep an adopted Navajo child whose mother gave the child for adoption to this white family?)

As I waded through the bureaucracy trying to find answers, I began thinking about its purpose (self-perpetuating) or existing for the good of the people?

It was beginning to look very telling -- and I was having a harder and harder time dealing with what I saw as a real lack of concern for the very important work of government. Perpetuation      The chaos that existed seemed to promote a "crisis Chaos      mentality". The Washington PR group perpetuated it, as did the Chairman. It was almost as if Washington could enter as the "knights in shining armor" to save the day!

Chairman MacDonald's immediate administrative staff consisted of three secretaries, and his personal assistants. But no chief of staff to run the show. No one ever spoke out. No one was ever on time for meetings. The Chairman always being (late for meetings, and canceling appointments. How many times would I have to apologize for the man?

From this chaos this crisis mentality could be perpetuated, but then out of this chaos no one could ever really be blamed for doing anything wrong.

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Speaking of chaos ..., as the date for the Phoenix announcement of the High Tech Summit was about to take place -- the panic began to build. Was this "classy" announcement really necessary? Already\* in his

quarterly reports and his radio addresses the Chairman had already talked about the High Tech Summit -- but Washington wanted to carry it further with the summit's co-chairman wanting to share the limelight with the Chairman MacDonald. This was to be the publicity agent's dream, if it came off. Next, I was faced with the announcement of the D.C. brainchild of a "High Tech" Summit in Leupp, Arizona.

MacDonald, Participating would be Chairman MacDonald, his old  
Goldwater, r ?

Press nemesis, Barry Goldwater, and Senator DeConcini.

Confer-

ence "So David McCann, what about transportation arrangements,  
press coverage, lodging, itinerary, quotes, briefing packets, speeches,  
radio clips?" And then there was poor Sally Glass (Sally was the realist among the Madison Group who saw through all the "phony baloney". Why she put up with it, I'll never know, ftt midnights-called me in Phoenix and was upset, and panic stricken over the Madison Group's efforts to enhance the Chairman's image. "Why, Dave," she said, "they've just finished 'meeting in California and have come up with more "ideas" for image enhancement!"

"You mean more chaos in the offing," I thought.

The press conference held in the Phoenix Press Club, which was a bar (with a stage set up for these events) was packed with reporters. The limos pulled up, and the politicians,

ever smiling, prepared themselves for the event.

There was Barry Goldwater -- us younger types should call him "straight shooter Barry" for he wasn't fazed by any of this -- he stood up and made some comments and told all those

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assembled he would do his best to make the Summit a success, and then he sat down. :

(The Senator was out to make peace with many people, including Chairman MacDonald, although I really don't think the feelings were the same on the part of the Chairman.)

Pete Segall cooed over his success, and the Chairman was enjoying the publicity and the limos and all the trappings of power. I'd seen it all before, and I wasn't impressed.

As they were gleaming over the success over the press conference, I was wondering about the follow-up to any Washington production of the High Tech Summit as it related to job development.

With unemployment well over 30%, who was doing the job of job creation? The CANDO staff had long touted its successes, in trying to reduce unemployment but as one Washingtonian told me, it was they, the Madison Group, that was actually doing the work.

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(Whoever is responsible, it's a national tragedy that so many talented native Americans should be without work. So while the

infighting between "professional" agencies continues,

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the people suffer.)

Monday, August 15 -- back to normalcy? No, not really. The Madison Group was back in Window Rock -- this time with their

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President and his controller working out a budget request for the Tribal Council. And half heartedly, they asked me what I needed -- as if my budgetary matters had to be taken up by them, as opposed to their being considered by the internal Navajo operation.

I was now faced with some concerns about the ethics of public relations. In my mind, the job of the public relations practitioner is to enhance the client's image with to a variety of publics, without any exaggerations, through the truthful communication with the media. No hype. Just be truthfully concise.

Now, who was the client? Was it Chairman Peter MacDonald, or the Navajo Nation. The Navajo Nation was footing the bill but who was getting all the publicity? And what, exactly, was being accomplished?

(The Washington based Madison Group had as one of its officers, a friend of the Chairman -- Ed Gabriel -- who thought his agency was doing the best for whom Ed felt was his client, namely Chairman Peter MacDonald. The Chairman was the connection for the renewal of their contract.)

( With increasing demands from the Madison Group, I began wondering more and more, who was I working for. The people of the

Navajo Nation or the Madison Group?

The Madison Group's view of the profession was in sharp contrast to mine. My thought was that in government relations work, you work for the people; let them come to see that government

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works on their behalf. Eventually, through much painstaking work, they will come to appreciate the work of government and its administrators.

But the Madison Group had other ideas -- create the publicity for the Chairman -- for he was the "Navajo Nation". Use whatever issue was necessary to improve his image. But for me, my life had not been spent working solely to improve images, but to make the system work for the people.

"This is my issue!" said the Madison Group's John Sparks. And he had spent sometime becoming fully knowledgeable about the age old controversy between the Navajos and Hopi tribes. In my mind, however, his fervor was born out of selfishness and in recognition that so long as



there was no resolution to the issue, lobbyists, attorneys and public affairs groups could reap- some pretty handsome rewards for perpetuating the issue.

Suddenly and strangely three weeks before the single largest gathering of Navajos at the Navajo Nation Fair in August Chairman Peter MacDonald (or was it the Madison Group after their secret meeting in California?) decided he wanted publicity for his efforts to assist those Navajos living in Congress-( Congressionally partitioned Navajo-Hopi land.

The crux of the problem was that the Hopis and Navajos couldn't solve the land disputes between- themselves. So Congress stepped in creating partitioned land for the Navajos and the Hopis. Neither tribe was particularly happy about the arrangements -- and Navajos were offered relocation incentives to move to Navajo land.

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resisting relocation, they were permitted to stay on the land, and to make repairs to their homes. Whenever repairs took place, the Hopis were to be notified.

Pronouncements for the Navajo Nation pointed their willingness to help in the efforts for their citizens, but nothing was really done --

until three .weeks before the Navajo Nation Fair.

First there was the announcement to me late one Friday morning that I was to find a photographer by 3:00 P.M. to spend the weekend with the Chairman taking pictures of homes in the partitioned areas. This was to be a secret mission.

A visit                What I found demoralize any human being. The living to the  
parti-        conditions were inhumane. Individuals of all ages, old and young  
tioned  
lands        alike, were living in ramshackle conditions. No running water, and often there were long walks to the privies.

I recall an elderly lady, totally blind, who weaved beautiful rugs and tapestries. Simply by touch, she could tell the color of the yarn.

Set against her deplorable living conditions, was a wall hanging of Jesus Christ, a hanging she could no longer see. But, I suspect, she could sense the spiritual force coming from that image. This provided her support for her continuing existence in this desolate part of the Navajo Nation.

All of us who were on the tour, which included the Chairman, his wife, and many of the members of the administrative, solemnly went from home site to home site over rutted and dusty roads.

After viewing three of the sites, the photographer and I wondered, "Were there alternatives to these living conditions?"

We both knew the obvious answer.

But it was this continuing controversy between the Navajo and Hopi tribes that was center to the Madison Group's efforts to bolster the Chairman's popularity. The Hopis, under federal law, had to allow repairs to Navajo home sites. The Hopis allegedly wouldn't permit repairs, and often harassed Navajos who did. The Hopis said otherwise.

Originally I really thought this repair program (later named Project Hope), would be a marvelous humanitarian effort -- showing the best of government, even if long overdue, to provide for the people. But something happened where these poor people would be used for political purposes.

Project           The time was 4:00 P.M. on a Monday. Site: The Navajo Nation Conference Room. Participants: The Madison Group's Pete Segall, Chairman MacDonald; members of the staff.

From the meeting the name of the project was created --Project Hope. And throughout the meeting there would be a lengthy discussion on how to attract the national media to cover this event. Could we get Jesse Jackson, or Martin Sheen? Would we seek controversy? How would we react if a temporary restraining order was issued? Would bond money be available if anyone was ( arrested?

Creating           Already, a film crew contracted by the Madison Group was Crisis making the rounds throughout the reservation. Now, they could film the entire event. It was very ironic they would be available during the creation of this "crisis".

Something was wrong when I had to "hype" the story in order to attract media attention.

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John Sparks, the Madison Group's expert on this issue kept calling me wondering how I was doing in attracting the media. And then he would talk about his conversations with the national media types, who wanted something more than just the repair of homes. (The Madison Group would fail miserably in securing the national media attention the Chairman so desperately wanted. It was up to me.)

I was very creative in attracting the media to cover this story -- giving our Saturday story a touch of something "clandestine."

The contingency of reporters and staff were to converge in Holbrook, Arizona on the morning of the story and then proceed to the site of the first home repair. The media was kept in the dark^as to the site's location^--Secrecy was crucial. If the Hopi Tribe were to find out -- then we risked the entire project.

It became so well known where we were converging that the Holbrook Chamber of Commerce was being inundated with telephone calls about the "Chairman's press conference in Holbrook." So the Chamber of Commerce called me asking me what the story really was. And I said "This is where our activities get started on Saturday morning."

Media      Early Saturday morning, our entourage converged at the at the Holbrook Best Western. In addition to the four representatives

•^ from the Madison Group, there were seven media participants, from Albuquerque, Flagstaff, and Gallup. (The turnout from the

Madison Group showed the Chairman that they cared.)

Our entourage of eight vehicles proceeded over some very, very muddy roads, slipping and sliding all the way. Arriving at the first site, we found the Chairman attired in his carpenter's garb assisting in the repair of a home. "Hit a nail," a reporter called out. And the photographer took his pictures and the television cameras whirled.

Trying to get to the next site, we proceeded across rain swollen creeks and on roads so muddy that one cement truck-sank in it. (It later had to pour out its load of cement to prevent it from hardening. So now one portion of the road has a cement surface).

The reporters that accompanied saw through the facade of all of this "publicity stunt" and their harassment was worrisome, not annoying, because I began to sense there would be no turning this tide of cynicism that had developed toward the Chairman. Not even my "holding action" to prevent a further erosion of trust would be effective.

(They knew, and I knew that avenues existed for these Navajo families to get their homes repaired.)

Arriving back at the office on Monday, I was chastised for not having more media coverage on Sunday as well. Where was the national media?!? v

Washington certainly hadn't produced anyone, and now the buck was being passed right along to me.

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I had a chance to express my concerns to the Chairman but he kept reiterating his desire that he was paying Washington and me to find ways to attract national media attention to this issue. No if's, and's, or but's.

He was to be greatly disappointed.

Sending Washington was so panicked that it sent reinforcements Reinforcements to keep the project momentum going. Pete Segall returned, accompanied by the Chairman's old friend Dr. Edgar Kahn. They would certainly get things charged up.

First, their hired hand in Phoenix, Charles Pine, arranged for the Chairman to appear on radio and television talk shows in both Phoenix and

Albuquerque. The Chairman would back out of the radio interviews (much to the anger of the radio producers), and instead would focus exclusively on the television shows.

Then, they came up with the idea for the Chairman to tape a five minute radio spot (at considerable expense) where he would invite Navajos to the various repair sites. These announcements would be featured once every hour for the next 24 hours on radio stations that bordered the Navajo Nation. { One radio station refused to air them because "five minutes of a public figure talking?" Others did, because it meant m - o - n - e - y .

Washington's "creative genius" wasn't finished yet. They would get hats and t-shirts with the slogan "Project Hope"

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emblazoned on the front. (Did anyone think to balance the cost against the possible benefits from this maddening publicity?) As soon as the taping was done, I hopped aboard a single engine Cessna for the trip to the west and east of the reservation.

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As a passenger in a single engine aircraft, you place your life in the hands of the pilot and his aircraft. And beyond that, there isn't much worth worrying about anything. Besides, "Fred" was a seasoned veteran of flying.

We dodged a couple of thunderstorms enroute to Holbrook, our first

destination; missed hitting a few boys who, in their game of "chicken", ran right in front of the plane, as it was landing in Tuba City, and a few spectacular rock formations in the Monument Valley region "missed" enroute to Farmington, New Mexico from Page, Arizona.

Fred started talking as we lifted off from Page, Arizona and I was amazed at his knowledge of the region. He not only knew the topography, but also, the potential for the region. We both agreed, however, that the bureaucracy was stifling the creativity and the follow through on some very ( good projects, such as tourist and industrial projects.

, . (As I looked back on that week. I was thankful for two  
A moment

•j things -- the time I had to talk with Fred about the issues facing the Navajo Nation -- and the time spent with the editor of the St. Louis Post Dispatch, who asked me after work one day to join him in driving to Canyon de Chelley.

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Editor Bill Woo had been crisscrossing the nation to get a "pulse" on the feelings of the population. He had come to Window Rock to do a story on the political feelings of a member of the Navajo Nation -- and I was happy to have provided him some direction on individuals he should talk with and departments he should become familiar with.



It took us about two hours to get to the canyon. It wasn't as deep as the Grand Canyon -- but it was equally as beautiful. There are hogans that dot the shores of the river that lazily flow through the canyon. And the canyon, with its shades of amber, is in contrast to the deep, deep greens where farmers till the soil on the edge of the river. It was an experience I savored, as did Bill.

Enroute back to Window Rock, we talked about many, many things I was getting more and more frustrated with my position, with the media cynicism, that was not unfounded, and too, the work of the public affairs group out of Washington who was making policy for the Chairman. He was sympathetic to my plight.)

Meanwhile, back in the "world of reality", the crisis mentality was growing.

/ Dr. Edgar Kahn, who had a striking resemblance both

The (

contro- j\_n appearance and manner to William F. Buckley, Jr. (except

versial

speech

Edgar was considerably more liberal!) had been working on a speech the Chairman was to deliver on Saturday. And here these Washington types were creating a speech that sought greater controversy with the Hopis.

Chairman MacDonald's two hour speech to each Navajo group raised the "stakes" in the conflict. There was more finger pointing at the BIA, the Federal government, and the white man.

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It boiled down to this -- upon his arrival at the first site the first question he asked me was "How many media are here?"

On Sunday I went to church, and the biblical passage for the day read like this:

Fear not those of you who feel weak for the Lord  
will give you strength

"How timely," I thought -- and I would find as the week progressed I would need every bit of strength I could muster.

Sunday at 5:45 P.M. I received a call from the Chairman's secretary asking me to come at the office at 6:00. "Well," I said "it's a 30 minute ride from Gallup and what is this meeting about?"

"You'll have to ask Pete Segall" she said.

"Oh boy," I thought, "the Washington group is calling the shots again."

So I called Pete Segall at the Navajo Nation Inn; I was furious.

"Another rolling over the coals, Pete?" I asked.

"Listen, Dave, I'm tired and I'm depressed. There was no one from the media at the site where people locked arms together and ranted the praises for the Chairman."

I wasn't impressed. My anger had been growing as a result of my reading the Gallup Independent weekend articles (these articles were the tip of the iceberg in a long line of controversies I was asked to comment upon) about the aircraft company allegedly being promised the Navajo's purchase of three jets -- and their transporting the Chairman and his family to Boston. The Navajo Nation didn't buy the jets. The flight company's out almost \$90,000.00. And how was I\_ to reply to these allegations?

(Throughout my government career, perceptions counted for more than reality. If there are public perceptions of wrong doing then the reputation of government stands to be scarred. Like Caesar's wife -- government must be above reproach)

Said Segall "We'll put our own spin on it." (Would our response be the truth? No.) He went on to say "Listen Dave, if these articles and editorials bother you, well, things will get worse."

With that, I hung up, and prepared my letter of resignation. There would be no compromising the truth. I could not in good conscience, be a part of their schemes. My letter ( of resignation to

the secretary very simply read:

"The Honorable Peter MacDonald

Chairman, The Navajo Nation Window

Rock, Arizona

Dear Chairman MacDonald:

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immediately.

In my heart I know I've done my best to be of service to  
you, but because of so many differences with public relations  
policy, I cannot in good faith continue as your press secretary.

, //s// David D. McCann"

I walked into the meeting where the Washington representatives  
were seated and other Navajo administrative aides, I, in the most cordial  
voice possible, said "I'm resigning tonight -- and I want to wish all of  
you the very best. Good night."

I walked out and as I passed the conference room from the  
outside I heard laughter. So it was a joke.

Jim Croll of Gallup's KGAK radio picked me up and I returned to my  
apartment where Sunday night was spent writing a statement. The next two  
days would be the toughest of my life as I grappled with the notion of

telling what I felt were abuses of trust and a waste of money for programs that little benefited the Navajo people.

In other words, it was a time of personal crisis. But I felt right about what I was about to do -- for the system of Navajo government was not working to provide the necessary checks on what I saw were abuses of power.

Into the wee hours of Labor Day Morning, I prepared my statement, and arising after a very fitful sleep I called the Associated Press in Phoenix with the story. The statement read

The high hopes that one has coming into a new position, are not soon diminished unless one finds chaos, instead of order; a use of alcohol by many administrative staff members to ease work pressures; a seeking of personal enhancement instead of organized action for the larger good.  
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As a result of what I have seen plus what must be viewed as an irreversible trend to propaganda and dishonesty in communication with the media, I resigned as press secretary to the Chairman on Sunday evening at 7:30.

I'm just sorry Chairman MacDonald was late for his own meeting where my concerns would have been expressed to him in person. But being so taken by the work of his Washington media group, I suspect my words would have fallen on deaf ears.

The people of the Navajo Nation join with all Americans in expecting certain things from their government. Most importantly is honesty.

In the large organizations mistakes will be made -- and the good administrator will not try to pass the blame for mistakes onto anyone else's shoulders.

What I found is exactly the opposite. Everything is the fault of the federal government, or the BIA. Let's perpetuate the antagonisms. It obviously takes the attention off our own shortfalls.

Does this make for good government? NO.

And when dealing with this subject of honesty, we have to remember that government is a trust -- and any allusion to public monies being improperly spent will eliminate any trust the population has in government.

As a press secretary, I was bound and determined to deal in the truth -- and to rise above any malicious gossip. Unfortunately, in recent days, this code of ethics was to be violated by a concerted effort by the carpetbaggers from a media firm, who, so interested in the renewal of their contract, would seek to create a story. Not for the betterment of the people, but for the elected official of a nation.

To get the national media attention on an elected official was more important than to get the media attention on the plight of the people

How many telephone calls did I take from Washington, and their questioning. "How can we get the Chairman on national television?" If you look at my daily log, you'll see there was an obsession in getting the Chairman on national television. It was his obsession -- it was this media firm's obsession.

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The story of the HPL and Bennett Freeze is not about Chairman MacDonald^'about the people caught in a dispute between two very proud nations. And Project Hope is a good project, garnering the strength of the Navajo people to provide for those in desperate need. It's a story about people helping not controversy. And the work of people helping people must and should continue.

And there are avenues for the resolution of this situation between the Navajos and Hopis. Avenues available without the involvement of any publicity, where two leaders could sit down and discuss their differences. But no, the media group in Washington wants to keep this alive -- this one dispute. And so I was compelled to perpetuate this age old dispute in whatever way possible for the sole financial benefit of those thousands of miles away.

How many attorneys; how many media consultants will be kept busy by this one issue? And how many dollars will they reap? And who will ultimately benefit?

A hand of cooperation has been extended by one Chairman, to be totally ignored. Why?

The "experts" from Washington felt this controversy could be made into a full blown media event -- they say "Let's create the controversy so the national media will come in."

The result of this would not benefit the people most affected -- but the media group's client who so longs for this media attention.

There was total dissatisfaction with me when there were so few members of the media interested in the continuing story. Why the lack of interest? Could they see through the facade? And if they could see through this facade -- well, what of the next test story, and the next? What of my credibility?

I am reminded of Jerry terHorst, Press Secretary for President Ford, who took the high road with the media when talking to them about a possible Nixon pardon. All along he said "no pardon for Nixon." And you know the rest of the story. Nixon's pardoned, and terHorst's credibility was destroyed.

My coming here is not to create an image of a David vs. Goliath -- to topple a political giant -- for only the Navajo people can make the determination of whether the Chairman stays in office or not.

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I would hope, however, they would understand the truth beyond what any firm out of Washington would manufacture.

Please observe that I have not called them what they consider themselves -- a public relations firm. How many of them belong to the Public Relations Society of America or the NAGC? And how many of them give thought to any code of ethics? As a member of the NAGC, I must try, to the best of my ability to adhere to a code that says my conduct, in my professional life must be in accord with the public interest in recognition that each of us is a steward of the public's trust.

After observing the media event staged at Jeddito last Saturday, I was awed by the commitment of the people.

But too, I was confused.

A speech writer for the Chairman -- who, no doubt, years ago wrote speeches of peace, had now written a speech full of fighting words. And then to quote from the martyred minister, killed in Germany during World War II, I was left wondering how this was all relevant. Why, where does the exaggeration, and hypocrisy end?

I thought Blessed are the peacemakers. No, the Chairman wants controversy -- an adversarial relationship with each group.

Witness a recent incident involving the 20 - 25,000 recipients of General Assistance.

At a recent meeting with me, one individual expressed concern about the facts these individuals wouldn't receive their general relief checks in time because of a bureaucratic problem. And I was told the Chairman did not want to sign the papers releasing the money because he wanted another confrontation. But he was convinced to sign the document. Is this the way to run a government?

And the weekend edition of the Gallup Independent was most telling.

The allegations by the president of a flight company --whether true or not -- are just another example of how perceptions can do irreparable damage to the integrity of a governmental entity.

And then, when asking the Washington based media group how we would handle this -- I was told "we'd put our own spin on it!" At least in my mind, the bottom line would not be to put a spin on it -- but to ensure it was the truth.

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As the Washington media agency seeks to create a program for the Chairman -- they must *realize* there is so little substance behind what they are doing. Perceptions count for so much in government and there is little a press secretary can do to provide substance to an image that is so transparent and so lacking in depth.

This all boils down to what is right and wrong. And what does a press secretary do when faced with allegations of wrongdoing -- and told to get our story out - even if it isn't the truth.

What the Navajo Nation needs are not some high priced media consultants from Washington whose sole purpose is to get as much money for themselves as possible. Even if it means resorting to distortion, exaggeration, or half truths.

When I was told Sunday evening by the one Washington media consultant that things would get worse, well, what did that mean?

The Navajo Nation doesn't need another press secretary to put forth the propaganda -- and it doesn't need another high priced media firm whose contract is its primary concern. No, what the Navajo Nation needs is some common sense in the upper levels of government. The talent is there. Don't hire the media types --



hire the management firm who can make the Navajo Government more responsive to the needs of its people.

My situation is this either to tell the truth or create images. It was one of recognizing my being a modern day "sheep herder of information" except from a media group who is making Navajo Government policy thousands of miles away. It was one where I would act as the chief disseminator of propaganda, regardless of what I thought. It wouldn't benefit me -- it doesn't benefit the Chairman -- but it only benefits those whose pockets are lined with the money from the Navajo Nation. And what is the result?

My standing here is not easy. I have honorably served in various government positions in this nation.

But I feel that when the truth takes a backseat to exaggerations -- then someone must be willing to risk one's honor to let, in the words of a local newspaper, the truth be well told.

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It hit the wires soon thereafter -- and as a result, I  
Was the recipient of some pretty abusive calls from various  
sources. One, from the Madison Group's John Sparks, would be  
especially memorable. In language I wouldn't speak to my worst enemy,  
he, in his most sanctimonious style, talked of his accomplishments.  
He hoped to perpetuate for the benefit of his client forever and ever  
I listened politely for one hour and finally said "John, what do you  
want me to say?" His comments were not worth responding to. A lesson,  
I suppose^ when dealing with single issue advocates.

Memorably, the next call came from the Chairman's legal counsel

who threatened me with a slander suit -- and said because of my Project Hope was falling apart. (I thought if it was truly the people's project it wouldn't fail. If it was the Chairman's publicity stunt, it would.)

Monday night was a tough night -- especially after listening to the vitriolic comments of many. But alone -- I wrestled and with the decision to have the morning press conference. I'm glad I did. What needed to be said was said and I would hope the tribal council would thoroughly review public affairs "contracts.

The next morning, television stations, and representatives from the Albuquerque Journal, Gallup Independent, Arizona Republic and Farmington Daily News were all represented. This was not a particularly happy moment for me because of my admiration for the institutions of government and those who are the administrators of governmental policy. And yet with a

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public trust at stake -- I was not about to violate that trust.

My experience in the Army finance corps, and auditor's office taught me the valuable lesson of accountability of public monies -- and to ensure those monies were being spent for the benefit of the people. What I found in the Navajo Nation rankled me. And as a press secretary I was not about to be a party to telling half truths or providing a long line of "no comments" --or begin a policy of finger pointing. My name was not about to become "No comment McCann".

The break had been made -- and I left the press conference. It

was not a happy time in my life.

I am left to wonder about our trust responsibility to

What is the the "e Indians -- a policy perpetuated for generations. Is it a solution?

good policy? Is it moving Native Americans to finding that proper balance of maintaining their culture while ensuring they are participants in the "American Dream." Or do they, are Native Americans, want to be participants or to be left alone to choose their own destiny? Can they, like a state government, do it on their own without the traditional federal oversight?

It's something they will have to deal with free from the influence of attorneys or public affairs groups.

I'm just sorry I couldn't be of greater assistance in making government work for the people.